

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission (EDC) Meeting
The Harbour Inn, 101 North Harbor Road, St. Michaels, Maryland
November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Vice Chair, Haim Loran; Ted Bautz; Peter Dunbar; Jean Weisman; Paul Makosky; Gerald O'Mara and Jacqueline Wilson

Ex Officio Members Present: Mike Henry, Al Bond, Jennifer Williams, Cassandra Vanhooser and Timothy Jones

Attendees: St. Michaels' Commissioners Ann Boarder and Roy Myers, Scott Warner, MSRC and Tracy Ward, EEDC

Members Excused: Chairman, Geoff Oxnam, Ron Engle, Walter Chase and Scott Beatty

Guest Speaker: Vice Chairman Loran introduced Anthony Kern from Pinoak Partners, LLC. Pinoak, an investment firm based on the investment club rules with the Securities and Exchange Commission, has been recently created to attract investors for technology-based startups on the Eastern Shore. Mr. Kern provided an overview of how Pinoak Partners, LLC was created and its present status in attracting 100 investors with \$50,000 each to raise a base of \$500,000. Mr. Kern is retired as senior managing partner of Deloitte & Touche where he worked in corporate finance and global innovations. The Pinoak Partners, LLC includes Tom Haschen, CEO, Papillon, a local agricultural products and dairy feed company. Mr. Haschen has invested in several small businesses in the area. Mr. Kern serves on the board of the Easton Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Kern invited the EDC to refer entrepreneurs who have unique ideas that are innovative and sustainable and require financing to develop their projects to Pinoak Partners, LLC for review and consideration.

Call to Order: Vice Chairman Loran called the meeting to order, without a quorum, at 8:15 a.m.

Agenda and Minutes:

Correspondence: No correspondence received.

Old Business: The director provided an update on Talbot County Bill 1323, the Sustainable Tourism and Reinvestment District, which came before County Council at the October 27th County Council meeting. The County Council approved for introduction of the legislation in a Public Hearing, scheduled for their regularly scheduled meeting, November 24th to be held at 6:00 p.m. at the Court House, located at 11 North Washington Street, Easton, MD. The legislation pertains to the redevelopment of sites that are zoned for tourism or related uses such as restaurants, marinas and cultural centers, that are not currently in compliance. The legislation is important in that it supports an opportunity to bring property into compliance and be available for redevelopment, which will raise the property value and provide for additional employment opportunities.

The County Council is also working on the final draft of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. A redline version of the plan will be released for public comment, chapter-by-chapter, beginning in January with final approval scheduled for March. Jennifer Williams commented that a focus group, comprised of 18 individuals, representing a variety of sectors of the local economy, from around the county, will participate to review and comment on the draft Comprehensive Plan on December 02, 2015. A Public Hearing has been scheduled for December 11 at the Easton High School to review the final draft document. The record is still open; any written comments are welcome. The draft comprehensive plan will go on the agenda for the December EDC meeting.

The Federal Lab Consortium, Washington College and the Upper Shore Economic Development Offices hosted the "Mapping, Satellite and Sensor Technologies" Forum on October 15 at the Washington College campus. Over 85 representatives from 7 Federal Labs and universities participated. An overview of 10 research projects, conducted on the Eastern Shore were shared with significant contributions: monitoring water quality, cover crop yields, impacts of sea level rise, wetland creation and restoration, monitoring salt-water inundation, securing and protecting food, water and energy in disasters and war and the problems with standards for calibrating measurements from satellites built in other countries. The presentation can be found at the Washington College website: <https://www.washcoll.edu/centers/ces/gis/flc-conference/>. The goal for the OED in supporting this event was to build awareness for the research that is being conducted on the Delmarva Peninsula, identify gaps where more research can occur and identify commercial applications for the technology.

The Waterfowl Chesapeake Network Breakfast is scheduled Friday, November 13th at 9:00 a.m. at the Corporate Waterfowl Tent on Harrison Street to showcase the work being done by non-profits to support habitat reclamation and restoration in partnership with Waterfowl Chesapeake. The breakfast is an opportunity for the corporate sponsors to interact with the business community and learn more about the work conducted in support of environmental monitoring and restoration.

New Business: The director reported meeting with the Maryland Department of Commerce (MDC), formerly the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, (DBED) as an initiative of Governor Hogan to reorganize Maryland's efforts to be pro business and to attract investment to the state. Economic Development directors from the 23 counties and Baltimore met to review plans to revamp the current finance programs available as tools to incent local investment.

A Working Waterfront grant was submitted to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources by the Talbot County Office of Planning and Zoning to request funds for the development of a mater planning effort in Tilghman and Bellevue/Oxford to retain waterfront activities. The proposal will result in land use plans to support and retain areas on the rivers that are used by watermen and marinas and other water related activities, as well as the potential to attract tourism and visitors to these areas.

Communications Committee: Tim Jones reported the committee has met twice. The committee has developed goals to determine how the EDC communicates the value of economic development to a number of "customers," County Council, businesses and residents. The committee's role is not to take a position on any issues, but to make sure accurate information is presented to the EDC

and if the EDC concurs, to present the information to County Council. The next Communications Committee meeting will be on Thursday, November 12, at 3:00 p.m. at Easton Utilities conference room.

Business Environment Committee (BEC) Report: Ted Bautz, Chair reported the committee met on October 27. Mary Kay Verdery, Planning Officer, Talbot County Department of Planning, provided an overview of the proposed Bill 1323, Sustainable Tourism and Reinvestment District legislation and invited a discussion on the topic. The floating district will provide for properties used for tourism and related activities that are not in compliance to be eligible for redevelopment. Ms. Verdery advised the committee that the county is soliciting and conducting interviews for the supervisor position in the Office of Permits and Inspections.

There are a lot of projects underway in the Town of Easton; Harris Teeter, BJ's and Candle Light Cove is expanding; there is work at the Airport; 22 single family units are under construction, as well as work on the Stewart Building.

Director's Report: The director reported on various business projects: Phillips Wharf Environmental Center (PWEC) is developing a program for oyster aquaculture and related products; Savage Landscape is working through the permitting process; water and sewer extension to the Talbot Commerce Park has created consideration for two expansion projects; a company has expressed interest in an expansion on North Route 50; Composite Yacht continues with their interest in expansion; Mitchums, based in Trappe, will be operating as a new restaurant; Orion Safety Products is proceeding with layoffs as they are moving their division to North Bend, Indiana.

Easton Economic Development Corporation: Ms. Ward reported an interested party to grow Medical Marijuana signed a lease for the Black & Decker Building. The party will plan for use of 100,000 sq. ft. initially, with plans for an expansion to the total facility of 290,000 sq. ft. as the project matures. Maryland may issue up to 15 licenses statewide and there are 16 parties vying for projects on the Eastern Shore. The final announcement for those who will be participating in the program will be released in February/March 2016. The Easton project is expected to create 100 jobs at the Easton facility.

Cassandra Vanhooser, Director, Office of Tourism, reported on the Maryland Scenic Byways Program presentation hosted by the Office of Tourism. The workshop was an "idea generating session" to support the work and development that has been accomplished by the Tourism Departments and to highlight the economic impact. Talbot County represents the mid-shore section of the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway and there is anticipation of linking with the National Scenic Byways Program. Byways are an economic driver and a multiplier for driving visitors and revitalization to our small towns and villages. The Byways are especially popular with European Tourists and Talbot County pulls many international travelers from the UK, France and Germany. A huge growth market for Maryland is China, although they are more interested in the urban areas for shopping purposes, they are showing interest in exploring some of our more rural areas. Ms Vanhooser reported Jessica Rogers, CEO of the Avalon Foundation, presented on the economic impact of the Plein Air Festival in Easton and, Kelly Cox, CEO, Phillips Wharf Environmental Center, presented on their efforts to attract visitors to Tilghman. Both were well received.

The OED director is working on marketing for the Talbot County Office of Economic Development with Mike Henry, Easton Airport and Cassandra Vanhooser, Office of Tourism. A logo was developed, "Our People Make it Work," with consulting services to be used in the Maryland Eastern Shore Guide, published by Journal Communications. They will publish 10,000 copies for the Upper Shore Regional Counties and target industry sectors site selectors.

November 2nd and 3rd, the Federal Lab Consortium held its Mid-Atlantic Regional meeting at the Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center in Rockville. Three 3 technologies were highlighted for their accomplishments and approximately 100 attended from various companies and organizations in the area.

Town & Member Reports:

The director welcomed St. Michaels' Commissioners Ann Boarder and Roy Myers who provided an update on activities in St. Michaels. Mr. Myers reported St. Michaels Commissioners approved the ten-year comprehensive plan and they are the first town to complete their comprehensive plan under the new guidelines. Kristin Greenaway, President, The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum presented plans for a new major capital campaign and briefed the Commissioners on the proposed plans. The town of St. Michaels is working with the CBMM to submit for the DNR Working Waterfront grant as well. Jean Weisman, Town Clerk, St. Michaels reported they received a favorable review at the Critical Areas Commission Growth Allocation hearing for the Inn at Perry Cabin with an approval and refinement to their plans. St. Michaels has a new restaurant coming to town on Railroad Avenue. The Town Commissioners will be discussing the study and design for removing power poles in town at their next town commission meeting.

Paul Makosky, Member at Large: No report.

Tim Jones, Chesapeake College: reported the college hosted the health professions open house and it was well received. Comptroller Franchot visited the new Allied Health Building. The college is hosting their first basketball tournament in the new gym. In the spring, they will be able to host the regional NJCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments. The college will offer online courses for the winter break. On December 17, the college will be hosted by the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce at Scossa in Easton, for a presentation regarding the Career Technology Education Workforce Training Programs study of the 5 counties. The college is looking for the communities' feedback so they can further define program goals. The solar project is continuing to move forward; the design is almost complete. The college is applying for a grant to study battery storage technology on this system, which is being supported by the donation of a 500 KW battery for the college's use.

Ted Bautz, Commercial Real Estate: observed expansion is increasing in the business community. The Route 50 corridor, for the first time in a long time, is beginning to attract new investments. One of the Exxon Stations will be coming down and replaced by Aldi, which is a value-oriented grocery store. Kraft Foods is shutting down their Federalsburg facility.

Gerald O'Mara, Agriculture: reported Lucy Hughes and Greg Farley spoke at the Tidewater Farm Club and the Talbot County Farm Bureau in support of the Agriculture Curriculum. Talbot County has the most cover crop acreage in the state.

Jennifer Williams, Talbot County Council Liaison to the EDC: reported the draft of the Comprehensive Plan is the biggest project the County Council is addressing currently and they are completing a draft for public review and comment. Two areas have caused controversy: workforce housing and to what extent the county should be involved, to find some ways to encourage housing in the county; and, cleaning up the bay and to what extent should we be looking at extending sewer to communities in Talbot County. Ray Clarke, County Engineer provided information that a property, on a functioning septic system, is putting 20 times more pollution in the water than the property that is hooked up to sewer. Ms. Williams indicated that if the goal were to clean up the bay then increasing sewer would have a dramatic impact. The alternative idea is to provide sewer only to failing systems. Ms. Williams indicated they are seeking input on this matter. Do we want to limit it just to failing septic; or, do we believe we should be cleaning up as many septic as possible and get them on to sewer? The director mentioned the Communications Committee may be interested in supporting the County Council in accomplishing a dialogue on this issue. Mr. Jones agreed this would be a good project for the Communications Committee, to facilitate a fair and balanced dialogue on issues that are important to the county.

Cassandra Vanhooser, Office of Tourism: reported attendance at the Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit in Ellicott City and is pleased to announce Talbot County won the Visit Maryland Award for Excellence in Marketing and, the State of Maryland Premier Travel Destination. Previously, the Talbot County Office of Tourism used "The Hamptons of the Chesapeake Bay" to market and Ms. Vanhooser changed the promotion to "Escape to Talbot County." They were very honored to be recognized for their efforts. The good economic news from the Travel and Tourism Summit is that Tourism in Maryland has a \$16.4 billion economic impact and contributes \$2.2 billion in state and local taxes. Without tourism, each household would pay an additional \$1,010.00 in taxes each year. Ms. Vanhooser completed a 17-page bid to bring the Regional Conference of Travel Writers to Easton in September 2016 and Talbot County won the bid. The Tidewater Inn will be the host hotel and the Hampton Inn will be the overflow hotel. There will be 50-70 travel writers, as well as their entourage, in Talbot County next September.

Al Bond, the Arts: reported the Avalon had the best year to date and they are set to do it all over again. They recently bought the theater from the Town of Easton and are now engaged in planning for a large capital campaign to make all the necessary repairs to the building. Much of the exterior needs work. The Avalon is in the process of interviewing consultants to conduct an economic value study for the Avalon and its impact. The Avalon is the largest arts non-profit on the Eastern Shore and they would like to quantify exactly what that means.

Scott Warner, Mid Shore Regional Council (MSRC): reported the Mid Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which the MSRC drafts for the 3 counties, is now being updated with new project submittals. Broadband is the number one issue in the CEDS. Phillips Wharf Environmental Center, on Tilghman Island, has expanded through the support of the CEDS, with Hooper's Island Oyster Aquaculture, and together they are raising oysters and developing products.

Jacqueline Wilson, Business Community: No report.

Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford: reported Oxford is also making application for a Working Waterfront grant. There are two significant town-owned and managed slip areas, which commercial watermen utilize at greatly reduced slip fees. Tied into that is the significant economic driver of the marinas. Oxford is sensitive to the marinas slowly turning from working marinas (repairs, etc.) to more sales oriented businesses. They do not want to lose their talented boat workers. Another grant Ms. Lewis is working on is with the Department of Economic and Community Development focusing on commercial planning in the historic district. The main focus is on the Mews, in an attempt to find public funding and support to get that building back on the market.

Mike Henry, Easton Airport: reported Congressman Harris is sponsoring the second Annual Aerospace Career Day at the airport in Trident's hanger. Easton Airport is applying to become a gateway-designated airport. Mr. Henry was contacted by the National Intercollegiate Aviation Association to determine interest in hosting their national event October 16 – 19, 2016. There would be 10 to 15 Universities, with aviation programs, attending from all over the country, bring a lot of people to Talbot County.

Haim Loran, Vice Chair: No report.

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 a.m.

Upcoming Commission Meetings:

December 3 Easton Airport, Easton; January 7 Annual Meeting, Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Easton; February 4 Allied Health and Athletic Center, Chesapeake College, Wye Mills; March 3, Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Easton; April 7, Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Easton; May 5, Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Easton; June 2, Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Easton; July 7, NO MEETING.